

# DRAFT

## ANIMAL ISSUES TASK FORCE

Monday, March 4, 2013

6:00 p.m.

1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room – Busch Municipal Building

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mary Collette, Chairwoman; Carl Woodland, Janet Martin, Gwen Evans, Dr. Rita Wittu, Kathleen Cowens, Carrie Galvan, Karenanne Fitzsimmons, Dr. David Weddle, and Alicia Mathis.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Christian Mechlin, and Cindy Larson.

**Note:** Dr. David Weddle has replaced Dr. Michael Stafford; and Karenanne Fitzsimmons has replaced Randall Voss. Both of these individuals were sworn-in before tonight's meeting. Christian Mechlin and Cindy Larson have resigned due to conflicts, and there are no replacements for these two vacancy positions at this time.

**STAFF PRESENT:** Clay Goddard, Karen Prescott, Mike Brothers, and Nicole Fowler, Health Department; and Anita Baker Climer, City Clerk's Office.

**GUESTS:** Jim Swain, Citizen; Misti Fry, Side Kick Dog Training; Nathan Matney, Missouri State University-Graduate Student; and Mary Crawford, SAAFhouse Spay and Neuter Clinic.

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Chairwoman Mary Collette called the meeting to order at approximately 6:30 p.m., and welcomed everyone.

The Task Force briefly reviewed the meeting minutes of January 14, 2013.

Anita Baker Climer, City Clerk's Office, noted that a revision has been made regarding the last page, which should read:

“Ms. Mathis informed the Task Force that due to her teaching responsibilities this spring, she would be unavailable on Monday evenings until approximately 7:00 p.m.”

Gwen Evans moved to approve the January 14, 2013 meeting minutes as revised.

Carrie Galvan seconded the motion, and it was approved.

Clay Goddard, Assistant Director-Springfield/Greene County Health Department, noted that Corrine Smith, who originally contacted Chairwoman Collette regarding her interest in coordinating volunteers and fundraising efforts with the City in relations to the issue of animals, was unable to attend tonight's meeting.

Chairwoman Collette, Mr. Goddard, and Karen Prescott, Administrator of Environmental Health-Health Department, briefly discussed Ms. Smith's enthusiasm regarding her willingness to serve. Mr. Goddard reported that hopefully Ms. Smith would be available to attend a future Task Force meeting.

Ms. Prescott reported that she has referred Ms. Smith to contact a program representative/liaison in Kansas City to possibly review their fundraising and volunteer outreach coordination efforts relating to their animal program. Mr. Goddard noted that Ms. Smith has already visited the SAAFhouse, and the Friends of the Zoo, as well as conducted a “ride along” with Nicole Fowler, Animal Control Officer.

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In response to a question posed by Kathleen Cowens, Mr. Goddard and Ms. Baker Climer reported that a residency requirement is not required for every member to serve on the Task Force, since many members are representing several entities/organizations, such as SAAHouse, and the Southwest Human Society.

Following the discussion, Janet Martin noted that she does not have a formal presentation regarding the issue of Maddie's Fund, which is apparently a fund to help achieve and sustain a no-kill nation by providing solutions facing animal welfare through grant giving.

Ms. Martin briefly explained that several entities, such as the City, and the Southwest Humane Society, have to be willing to participate to help make the local Community no-kill for animals. She reported that she would e-mail some information to Karenanne Fitzsimmons, Chairman-Humane Society, for their board to review and possibly consider in the future.

In response to another question posed by Ms. Cowens, Ms. Martin briefly addressed that Maddie's Fund helps provide monies for various programs, such as to help collaborate organizations and communities that are leading the way in saving healthy and treatable shelter dogs and cats through innovative marketing, adoption, customer service and behavioral and medical programs; however, there is not funding provided for "brick and mortar." Ms. Martin noted that approval for Maddie's Fund has been previously reviewed, but there has not been vested interest from joint entities to participate, so hopefully, possible participation can be re-considered.

Following the discussion relating to Maddie's Fund, the Task Force and Mr. Goddard discussed the issue of breed specific legislation.

Mr. Goddard gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Overview of the Pit Bull Ordinance." (*Please refer to Exhibit A located within the City Clerk's Office for additional information.*)

The following is an outline of the presentation:

- A. Events Leading up to the Ordinance
- B. October 16, 2006 New Pit Bull Ordinance goes into effect
- C. Intake and Disposition of Dogs 2001-2012
- D. % of Pit and Pit Mixes at Intake
- E. Number of Total Dog Bites Versus Bites by Pits & Pit Mixes
- F. Vicious Dog Convictions
- G. Intake and Disposition of Pits & Mixes

During Mr. Goddard's presentation, he briefly made reference to/discussed some additional information: Pit Bull Statistics for 2011; Pit Bull Statistics for 2012; Ten Year Report Explanation Sheet; and a compiled listing of previous articles pertaining to vicious animals within the Community. (*Please refer to Exhibits B – E located within the City Clerk's Office for additional information.*) He reported that this information would be e-mailed to the Task Force in the near future.

A copy of an e-mail regarding dog bits from January 2013 to the end of February 2013, as well as a listing from 2001 to 2012 in relations to animal statistics, which includes bites, was provided to the Task Force during tonight's meeting. (*Please refer to Exhibit F & G located within the City Clerk's Office for additional information.*)

Mr. Goddard updated the Task Force regarding the history of the Pit Bull Ordinance.

The Task Force and Mr. Goddard briefly discussed the history relating to vicious dogs within the City, the Pit Bull Ordinance, and breed specific legislation, as well as the issue of the City's guidelines regarding vicious dogs.

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Mr. Goddard, Ms. Prescott, and Ms. Fowler responded to questions posed by the Task Force.

In response to a question posed by Carl Woodland, Mr. Goddard reported that in 2008, the dog breed causing the most bites in relations to the City's animal statistics was pit bulls followed by mixed pit bull breeds.

In response to another question posed by Ms. Cowens, Mr. Goddard reiterated that the Pit Bull Ordinance went into effect on October 16, 2006.

Mr. Goddard briefly addressed that he feels there are bites that are not reported to the Health Department due to individuals refusing to get a loved one, an acquaintance/neighbor, and/or the animal into trouble; thus, the actual number of bite figures should probably be higher than what has been reported.

In response to a question posed by Chairwoman Collette, Ms. Fowler briefly addressed that the shortest time frame in relations to a vicious dog conviction was approximately a 3 month process from beginning to end. She reported that the process requires citizens working with the Health Department staff to help enforce the issue of vicious dogs within the Community due to citizen complaints/requests needing to be filed with the City before the process can begin; thus, it requires citizen involvement.

In response to another question posed by Ms. Cowens, Mr. Goddard reported that, normally, the issue of vicious dogs begins with a citizen complaint/request due to the limited staff available to actively investigate and enforce the various rules and regulations pertaining to animals, which includes dogs, within the City. He noted that there was one incidence that he can recall where the vicious dog process was initiated by the City as opposed to a citizen in relations to a Labrador dog, which was owned by a high profile individual within the City, but typically the process begins with a citizen complaint/request.

In response to a question posed by Ms. Galvan, Ms. Fowler noted that there are approximately 900 registered pit bulls/pit bull mixes within the City at this time.

Ms. Galvan distributed handout information regarding the issue of dangerous dogs to the Task Force, as well as noted that she e-mailed the Task Force an article before tonight's meeting entitled "A New Day for Georgia's Responsible Dog Owners." *(Please refer to Exhibits H & I located within the City Clerk's Office for additional information.)*

Ms. Galvan briefly addressed that animal associations/organizations, such as the Association of Pet Dog Trainers, use the Ian Dunbar bite assessment scale for assessing dog bits, because many dogs have various bite patterns.

Alicia Mathis arrived at approximately 7:05 p.m.

Mr. Goddard briefly explained that he feels the City's vicious dog guidelines and the pit bull ordinance have worked within the City. He expressed that these guidelines took quite some time to draft and develop, and he feels those efforts should not revert backwards in relations to helping protect the Community, which includes children, from vicious dogs, such as pit bulls and pit bull mixes. Mr. Goddard voiced that the issue of vicious dogs had become a public health crisis within the Community, which is why guidelines were adopted by the City Council several years ago. Thus, any possible revisions to the issue of vicious dogs and the Pit Bull Ordinance should continue to help protect the Community and children in relations to vicious animals within the City.

The Task Force and Mr. Goddard continued to discuss the issue of vicious dogs, pit bulls, and breed specific legislation.

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In response to a question posed by Ms. Evans, Ms. Fitzsimmons reported that pit bulls may be adopted out at the Southwest Humane Society; however, strict criteria and conditions have to be met before an adoption of a pit bull can take place.

Per the request of the Task Force, Mr. Goddard reported that he would speak with the City Attorney regarding obtaining an opinion in relations to the possibilities of the City's Animal Shelter allowing rescue organizations that work with City staff to rescue pit bull and pit bull mixed puppies, which are six months of age or under, for adoption in the future. He reported that the issue of liability in relations to the Animal Shelter allowing rescues to acquire the pit bulls/pit bull mixes for possible adoption has been a concern/issue with the City, which is why pit bulls/pit bull mixes have not been allowed to be rescued at this time.

The Task Force discussed their thoughts in relations to the issue of breed specific legislation, which several members expressed their opposition for targeting one breed of dogs (i.e. pit bulls) over another one.

Ms. Galvan and Ms. Evans briefly expressed that they feel public awareness and education are needed in relations to informing citizens regarding the issue of vicious dogs versus utilizing breed specific legislation.

Dr. David Weddle briefly expressed that he feels "streamlining the process" better maybe the answer versus targeting one breed over another. He reported that possibly a deferential license could be considered. Dr. Weddle addressed that there are other dog breeds, such as Presa Canario, that are probably more vicious than pit bulls and pit bull mixes. He noted that he feels more resources/tools should also be provided to the City's Animal Control Officers in handling/dealing with animals, such as vicious/dangerous dogs, on a daily basis.

In response to a question posed by Ms. Martin, Dr. Weddle reported that he hasn't seen or euthanized any other vicious/dangerous breeds of dogs other than pit bulls/pit bull mixes since he has become the City's contract veterinarian. Dr. Rita Wittu noted that she has seen a few other vicious/dangerous dog breeds at her veterinary practice for medical assistance/treatment at this time.

Ms. Fowler briefly expressed that as an Animal Control Officer she feels the rules/guidelines should be clear and concise in relations to animals, so officers can properly enforce them and protect the Community. She reported that she feels the current vicious/dangerous dog regulations are working at this time, although the process, which requires citizen involvement, takes quite some time to complete.

Ms. Evans briefly voiced that she feels in relations to the issue of the vicious/dangerous dog regulations, she doesn't feel that "innocent" animals should be punished just because a dog is guarding and protecting his yard regardless of animal size (big or small) and could be turned in by a neighbor to the City for barking and patrolling his/her yard area; thus, any possible revisions should be carefully considered. She also expressed that she is opposed to euthanizing all pit bulls and pit bull mixes, and should be based upon any dog that has been deemed vicious/dangerous in relations to euthanasia.

Following further discussion, Mr. Goddard informed the Task Force that within the past month, the Health Department had to investigate a Chihuahua, who was terrorizing a local neighborhood, as a vicious dog. He reported that a "pattern of behavior" has to be established in relations to designating a dog as vicious within the City.

The Task Force and Mr. Goddard continued to discuss the issues of pit bulls/pit bull mixes, breed specific legislation, and vicious dogs.

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Ms. Mathis briefly expressed that she feels pet owners should be held responsible for their animals within the City.

Chairwoman Collette briefly referred to Exhibit G relating to the 2001 – 2012 animal statistics. She expressed that she feels the statistic results should be lower in relations to dog bites, so possible revisions should be considered/explored to help promote better results.

Chairwoman Collette suggested that possibly the sizing of dogs should be taken into consideration versus the breed.

In response to a question posed by Ms. Martin, Mr. Goddard cautioned the Task Force regarding any possible revisions to the City's animal regulations, which may pose unintended consequences to the Health Department and Animal Shelter, such as a possible increase in animal intakes with already limited resources/space/staff at the Shelter at this time, as well as budgetary restraints.

In response to another question posed by Mr. Woodland, Mr. Goddard reported that if a dog is impounded by an Animal Control Officer, the animal is held for 5 days before possibly being rescued by an animal organization, while if an owner voluntarily drops off an animal, the process of rescue may be expedited, because the animal is not required to be impounded. He noted that if the Health Department receives a citizen complaint regarding a dog bite, the dog, no matter the breed, must be picked-up and quarantined by the Health Department for 10 days.

Following further discussion, several of the Task Force members expressed that they would like information pertaining to homeowner insurance statistic standards relating to dogs (i.e. payouts due to animal attacks/bites).

Ms. Galvan briefly addressed that she would assist Mr. Goddard in locating information pertaining to homeowner insurance statistic standards relating to dogs. She noted that pit bulls are the No. 1 most discriminated breed in relations to insurance, while Chihuahuas are the No. 1 bitters. Ms. Galvan reported that apparently insurance companies are not "paying out" more monies for incidences with certain breed as opposed to others at this time. She added that utilizing the "temperament of the dog" is becoming more of the insurance standard as opposed to the breed specific of the dog.

In response to another question posed by Ms. Cowens, Mr. Goddard briefly discussed the "pattern of behavior" required by the City in relations to the issue of vicious dogs. He reported there is a step by step process that is utilized before a dog can be deemed vicious by the City.

Ms. Galvan briefly explained that if a dog "snaps" for the first time and bites/attacks an individual/another animal the dog may be exhibiting a medical issue/problem, which is why the dog started exhibiting vicious/dangerous type behaviors due to not feeling well or experiencing pain, and needs treatment. She reported that she doesn't feel pit bulls have any more of a sever bite pattern than some other breeds.

Ms. Martin expressed that she feels it is important to educate individuals regarding the importance of spaying/neutering their animals, which helps to reduce some behaviors in animals.

Mr. Goddard and Ms. Prescott briefly commented that they feel the required registration of pit bulls within the City helps make owners take responsibility for their dog if an issue arises, and this requirement has made an impact in relations to pit bull/pit bull mixed issues/concerns within the City.

Following further discussion, Dr. Wittu briefly explained that she feels there isn't always a pattern of behavior in some breeds of dogs, which she has witnessed as a veterinarian, but more circumstances involved.

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The Task Force briefly discussed that the size of a dog may play a role regarding what damage he/she can cause in relations to viciousness upon an individual/animal.

Several of the Task Force members remarked that they feel possibly considering a pet license/registration for owners who have dogs of any size that cause nuisance complaint issues within the City should possibly be reviewed, so others are not “penalized” for having dogs in compliance with City regulations.

The Task Force briefly informed Mr. Goddard that they would like to review the information distributed by Ms. Galvan for discussion at their next meeting, continue their breed specific legislation discussion, review of possible homeowner insurance statistic standards information relating to dogs, and re-review of the Calgary Model as a possible option to consider.

Mr. Goddard reiterated that he would obtain a legal opinion from the Law Department pertaining to the liability issue of pit bulls, and if the Health Department would be able to possibly allow rescue organizations to obtain pit bull/pit bull mixed puppies, which are six months of age or below, for adoption.

In response to question posed by Ms. Mathis, Mr. Goddard reported that Recommendation No. 1 regarding possibly constructing a new Animal Shelter has been sent to the City Council for their review; however, no other recommendations (Nos. 2 & 3) have been finalized by the Task Force for City Council’s review at this time.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 1, 2013 at 6:30 p.m. at the Busch Municipal Building.

Due to time restraints, the Task Force did not specifically review and discuss Recommendation No. 3 in relations to policies and legislation during tonight’s meeting.

Following the discussion, the Task Force meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:05 p.m.